

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

1. Name of Property

historic name Howard School

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 400 W Culton Street [N/A] not for publication

city or town Warrensburg [] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Johnson code 101 zip code 64093

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this
[X] nomination [] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National
Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the
property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally []
statewide [] locally.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

Signature of certifying official/Title Claire F. Blackwell/Deputy SHPO Date _____

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

[] entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet [].

[] determined eligible for the
National Register
See continuation sheet [].

[] determined not eligible for the
National Register.

[] removed from the
National Register

[] other, explain
See continuation sheet [].

Signature of the Keeper

Date

Howard School
Johnson County, Missouri

5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	1	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site		sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure		structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		objects
		1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

EDUCATION/ school

Current Functions

VACANT/ Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Late Victorian

Other: Three-room, T-Shape school house

Materials

foundation Sandstone, Concrete

walls weatherboard

roof Asphalt

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Howard School
Johnson County, Missouri

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

Property is:

☒ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ **B** removed from its original location.

☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.

☐ **D** a cemetery.

☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ **F** a commemorative property.

☒ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

EDUCATION

ETHNIC HERITAGE: BLACK

Periods of Significance

1888-1955

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person(s)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Newcomer, John—Architect

Lowe, William—Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State Agency

☐ Federal Agency

☐ Local Government

☐ University

☒ Other:

Name of repository: Heritage Library, Johnson County
Historical Society, Warrensburg, Missouri.

Howard School
Johnson County, Missouri

10. Geographical DataAcreage of Property 1**UTM References**

A. Zone Easting Northing
15 436960 4290660

B. Zone Easting Northing

C. Zone Easting Northing

D. Zone Easting Northing

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared Byname/title Dr. William Foley & Dr. Jeff Yeltonorganization Department of History & Anthropology date 8/28/01street & number Central Missouri State University telephone 660-543-4427city or town Warrensburg state MO zip code 64093**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name The Jesus Saves Pentecostal Church of Warrensburgstreet & number 400 W Culton telephone 660-747-5369city or town Warrensburg state MO zip code 64093

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 11

Howard School
Johnson County, Missouri

7. Narrative Description

The Howard School building sits on its original site on Culton Street in western Warrensburg, on the margins of a residential neighborhood. The older core of the building is a one-story, three-room, T-shaped building with a central entrance hall. The foundation consists of Warrensburg Sandstone, though three additions sit on foundations of concrete blocks. The roof is hipped, but there is a gable over the front entrance. The frame building, which is clad in weatherboard, is an unelaborate structure. However, the front gable has Late Victorian style features, such as a truss, decorative shingles, and decorative panels. The Jesus Saves Pentecostal Church of the Apostolic Faith, an African-American congregation, now owns the school, which they used as a place of worship for several years after they purchased it in 1969. Their present church, built in the 1980s, stands a short distance behind the Howard School within the same lot. The school building is not in good condition, as deterioration has occurred in the roof, weatherboarding, and interior.

The lot faces Culton Street on the north. The land is lower to the west and contains a recent gravel driveway. The western edge of the lot slopes down into a wooded ditch. The new church is a short distance to the south. The church is built low to the ground, so Howard School actually towers over it. Past the new church, the southern part of the lot slopes down into another ditch that borders Pine Street. Across Pine Street is Blind Boone Park, a historic African-American park built by the city near the end of the segregation era. To the east of the school is a raised residential lot, separated by a short retaining wall.

Although the construction of the new church building and an adjacent driveway has altered the rear and side yards, the front yard of the building retains its older context. A retaining wall separates the raised, level schoolyard from Culton Street, and a set of broad concrete steps allows access from the street. A concrete sidewalk links these steps to the front entry. The retaining wall consists of dry-laid blocks of Warrensburg Sandstone. The blocks are unfinished and marked by quarrying tools. Between the wall and the school are two visible features: a metal flagpole set in concrete and a nearby concrete patch that possibly relates to a sign, school-bell post, or other facility. The flagpole also has a sign bracket. On one face of the sheet-metal sign is "Johnson County Public Library," an institution that briefly occupied the facility in the 1950s. The other face has "Warrensburg Public School Kindergarten" (reflecting another post-segregation use of the building) painted over by the name of the church.

The older core of the school—three rooms joined by a T-shaped hallway—rests on a foundation of Warrensburg Sandstone blocks that are similar to those used in the retaining wall. These are dry-laid stones, though some mortar patching occurs in places. The western portion of the foundation is fully exposed, and consists of three courses of stones.

Documents indicate that the Warrensburg School District also built a coal shed and privies when they constructed the school. The 1914 Sanborn Map shows a small outbuilding southwest of and adjacent to the school. This probably was the coal shed. The privies presumably stood at the back of the lot, which is lower in elevation. These original outbuildings were undoubtedly removed following a 1948 modernization of the building.

Three 1948 additions to the building stand on concrete-block foundations. Two of these are small (14 x 14 foot) bathrooms placed in the inner corners of the T. These are mirror images of each other, having small side windows and exterior doors. The third addition lengthened the south wing of the building by about 20 feet. The entire building is clad in white-painted weatherboards, though the boards are noticeably shorter on the southern extension.

There is a small basement beneath the southern wing addition. Concrete cellar steps lead down into it from outside, and a nearby ground-level window has been sealed. A furnace once was in this basement, as indicated by a brick chimney on the south wall, between the cellar door and the former window, and by an iron coal hatch, set near ground level on the west side.

The Howard School has a relatively low-pitched hipped roof, though it is unclear if the south end originally was gabled or hipped. The roof has suffered deterioration and leakage, which has affected the interior condition of the building. The front gable over a recessed porch faces Culton Street and contains the only elaboration of the facade. A fancy truss, including spindle work, crosses the peak of the gable, and it is flanked by curvilinear verge boards, one of which is now gone. When the building was used as a church, a small wooden cross

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 11

Howard School
Johnson County, Missouri

was nailed to the peak of the gable, and it remains there. A row of tall decorative shingles is below the truss. Below these is a row of 11 square panels, each about 1 foot square. Within each panel, the boards are set at different angles. The overall effect of these decorative shingles and panels is to break up the texture and lines of the surrounding horizontal weatherboards. This appears to be a muted example of Late Victorian architectural style.

The recessed front porch encloses an area of about 7 by 3.5 feet. A set of double doors leads into the school. Each door has six panels, the upper four of which are glazed. There also are four glass panes in the flat transom. The plastered ceiling of the halls and rooms are about 12 feet tall. The interior walls are plastered, though in several areas the underlying lathes are exposed. The floorboards appear to be original.

A row of metal coat hooks once hung on the west wall by the front entrance. A small, high shelf is near the southern end of the entry hall. It is unclear if these were original facilities, but would be consistent with a schoolhouse. Globe-style lights hang in the halls and classrooms, reflecting late electrification. A small exterior light also hangs over the front entrance.

Documents indicate that the original schoolhouse consisted of three 32-x-24-foot classrooms and two hallways. The building retains this design. The entry hall separates two classrooms of this size. Each of these classrooms has two doors leading into the hallway, and four windows. The doors are simple and lack panels. The narrow windows are about 10 feet in height. They are relatively plain two-over-two, double-hung windows, with the simplest of sills. The windows are now covered by aluminum-framed storm windows.

The west room of the pair of front classrooms is the best preserved. Remnants of blackboards, their moldings, and chalk shelf indicate that the room had chalkboards around nearly its entire circumference, including between windows. This is unusual, as Henry Barnard, an early champion of planned schoolroom designs, strongly argued against cross-lighting or having students face windows while they worked.¹ That principle appears to have been common in architectural writings since Barnard.²

The east classroom has been recently modified. Kitchen facilities stand along the east wall, separated from the rest of the room by a divider of paneling. The east classroom also contains a large closet. The closet, built into the northwest corner of the room, is about 10 x 2.5 feet in size, and extends to the ceiling. The closet has two standard doors and two hatches into loft space over them.

The cross-hall separates the two front classrooms from the rear of the building; it contains a series of features that relate to use of the building as a school. At either end of the hall are entrances. Although these have been modified by the addition of restrooms, the original door frames and transoms are in place and show that the back entrances were identical to that of the front: recessed porches of the same size with double doors and transoms containing four panes of glass. Coat hooks occur within the hall behind the former door locations. The ceiling of the cross-hall contains a small trapdoor leading into an attic.

The rear classroom, which also originally measured approximately 32 by 24 feet, has been modified with a major extension to the south. Access from the cross-hall is through a set of paneled double doors. The rear classroom originally had two windows to the east and two windows to the west. The extension added a third window on each side. Blackboards extend along the north wall, on both sides of the doorway, and along the east and west walls between the windows. This cross lighting is contrary to architectural theory in school design.³ The rear classroom has a stovepipe flue in its east wall, the only flue visible in the original building.

The extension of this room added approximately 20 feet to its length through the removal of the original south wall. An additional door and two windows were added as part of the extension. The south end of the room contains a stage with wing entrances. A basement lies underneath this room extension.

1 Henry Barnard, *School Architecture*. 1970 Reprint. Edited by J. McClintock and R McClintock (New York: Teachers College Press, 1970), 31-32, 56-57.

2 S.A. Challman, *The Rural School Plant for Rural Teachers and School Boards, Norman Schools, Teachers' Training Classes, Rural Extension Bureaus*, (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1917), 66, and Edward C. Earl, *The Schoolhouse*, (Washington D. C., 1919), 15-19.

3 Barnard, *School Architecture*, 31-32, 56-57; Challman, *The Rural School Plant*, 66, and Earl, *The Schoolhouse*, 15-19.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 11

Howard School
Johnson County, Missouri

Except for the alternation of windows with blackboards and the cross lighting, the design of the Howard School appears to follow many of the theoretical principles of architect Henry Barnard, as well as later writers. The two entrances into the cross-hall probably were meant to be segregated by sex, as Barnard argued that progressive schools needed separate entrances for boys and girls, each “furnished with scraper, mat, hooks or shelves, sink, basin and towels.”⁴ Barnard also championed the idea of large schoolrooms with ample ceilings for the healthy circulation of air, well lit by a few tall windows in one or two walls. Barnard estimated that each person needed at least 150 ft³ of space.⁵ Interestingly, many of the room sizes that Barnard discusses are larger than those in Howard School. His closest example in size is a 30-x-25-foot room designed for 60 students.⁶ Later architectural writers argued for smaller numbers of students for their classrooms. Earl claimed that classes should contain 30-35 students, with 40 as a maximum, with classroom sizes being about 20-27 feet by 23-32 feet with a 12-13 foot ceiling.⁷ His ideal classroom size was 25 x 32 feet, almost identical to that of the three Howard School classrooms.

Barnard does illustrate one floor plan that resembles Howard School. It is the ground floor of a two-story Gothic Revival school. The floor plan contains three rooms, similar in placement to that of Howard School: An entry hall with two rooms flanking it (with windows on two sides), a cross-hall, and a rear classroom. The cross-hall has separate rear entrances into the school for boys and girls.⁸

4 Barnard, *School Architecture*, 56.

5 Barnard, *School Architecture*, 56.

6 Barnard, *School Architecture*, 123-25.

7 Earl, *The Schoolhouse*, 11, 15.

8 Barnard, *School Architecture*, 148-49.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 11

Howard School
Johnson County, Missouri

8. Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary: Howard School in Warrensburg, Johnson County, Missouri is significant under Criterion A in the areas of ETHNIC HERITAGE—Black and EDUCATION. The Warrensburg School Board erected the building in 1888 as a replacement for an 1867 one-room African American school located on the same site. The American Missionary Association had purchased the property in 1867 with funds raised by members of Warrensburg's African American community. The earlier structure, which also was called the Howard School, had been constructed with assistance provided by the Freedmen's Bureau. From the beginning, the first Howard School building was too small to accommodate Warrensburg's black students. Eventually the school board acceded to demands that it provide more satisfactory quarters for local African American students and approved construction of the present structure. After its completion in 1888, the frame building was the sole public educational facility in Warrensburg available to African American students during the period of significance. The school closed in 1955 when the Warrensburg schools were integrated following the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark 1954 decision, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, which outlawed segregation. The experiences of students and teachers at the Howard School exemplified both the hardships and the successes that were commonplace for African Americans in Missouri's segregated educational system. Named in honor of General Oliver Otis Howard, Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau, the Howard School is one of the Missouri's oldest remaining African American school buildings. It also is a rare example of a Missouri school with documentation linking its early history to each of the three principal agencies that were responsible for the development of black schools in the state following the Civil War: the American Missionary Association, the Freedmen's Bureau, and the Missouri public school system. The Howard School's founders also had close ties with Missouri's first African American institution for higher learning, the Lincoln Institute in Jefferson City, later known as Lincoln University. John Newcomer, a draftsman employed by a Kansas City architectural firm, was engaged by the school board to draw up plans for the Howard School. The period of significance begins with the school's completion in 1888 and runs until 1955, the year that the Howard School was closed. The building is in poor condition but remains essentially unchanged from the period of significance and largely reflects its 1888 appearance. As one of Missouri's oldest surviving black schools, the Howard School is an exemplary example of African American public education in post-Civil War Missouri. To a remarkable degree, its well-documented history is a microcosm of the larger story of the struggle by African Americans to attain educational parity in Missouri. For these reasons, it qualifies for listing at a level of state significance.

Elaboration: During the Civil War, the American Missionary Association (AMA) assumed an active role in seeking to promote the creation of African American schools in Missouri. The Christian philanthropic organization sent the Reverend George Candee to St. Louis in 1862 to investigate the prospects for establishing black schools there.⁹ Initially the AMA concentrated its activities in St. Louis, but in 1864, Candee traveled to western Missouri in search of suitable sites for Freedmen's schools. He identified Warrensburg as promising locality for such a school and urged officials in the AMA's New York headquarters to send a teacher there.¹⁰ The AMA complied, and in January 1865, Cynthia Ann Reed Briggs arrived in Warrensburg to take up the task. The recently widowed Briggs had attended Oberlin College in Ohio, an institution long in the forefront of black education in the United States. Her husband, a Union army surgeon, had recently died from unspecified causes.¹¹ From the outset, she experienced hostility at the hands of locals opposed to the establishment of a black school. Briggs wrote from Warrensburg that she was in "Dixie Land which I have found by sad experience is not yet the land of the Free or the Home of the Brave."¹² After outlining her problems in a letter to Governor Thomas C. Fletcher, Missouri's chief executive directed local military authorities to protect Briggs at bayonet point if necessary. William Baker, a local newspaper editor, alleged that Mrs. Briggs had "Negro on the brain" and put blacks "above the whites."¹³ However, Briggs was not without defenders. S. K Hall, editor of the *Warrensburg Standard*, lauded her efforts and reported that nearly 100 students had attended her classes in a log structure, known as the McNeil School.¹⁴ Poor health, perhaps exacerbated by the stressful conditions she encountered, prompted Briggs to leave Warrensburg at the close of the school term in June. In her absence Briggs's eager students continued to meet, teaching each other as

9 Joe M. Richardson, "The American Missionary Association and Black Education in Civil War Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review*, 69 (July 1975), 437-43.

10 George Candee to George Whipple, August 15, 1864, AMA Archives.

11 Carrie Ann Reed Briggs to George Whipple, August 6, 1864, AMA Archives.

12 Quoted in Richardson, "The American Missionary Association and Black Education in Civil War Missouri," 443.

13 Richardson, "The American Missionary Association and Black Education in Civil War Missouri," 444.

14 *Warrensburg Standard*, June 17, 1865.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 11

Howard School
Johnson County, Missouri

much as possible. She returned to Warrensburg in November of 1865 and remained there until June of the following year. The McNeil School continued to prosper under her tutelage. In addition to the daytime classes taught by Briggs, the Reverend M. Henry Smith, another agent of the AMA, offered night classes for those unable to attend during the day.¹⁵ Smith, a Congregational minister originally from New York, had also attended Oberlin College. Like Briggs he came to Warrensburg in 1865 with AMA support. He attempted to organize a new church in Warrensburg but turned to teaching when his congregation was unable to provide him with a salary adequate to support his family. Following the creation of a separate Warrensburg school district in 1866, the school board appointed Smith to take charge of its black schools.¹⁶ It was a daunting assignment.

During her turbulent stay in Warrensburg, Briggs often relied on the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau) for protection and support.¹⁷ Congress created this federal agency in 1865 to provide relief and assistance to blacks and whites whose lives had been disrupted by the Civil War. The Bureau made the education of freedmen and women a major priority. Between its founding in 1865 and its dissolution in 1870, the Bureau helped support more than 9000 freedmen's schools with 247,000 students. In Warrensburg, as elsewhere, AMA officials looked to the Freedmen's Bureau for help in underwriting the costs of their educational efforts in Missouri.¹⁸

The McNeil School building, where Briggs first held classes, had been constructed on land abandoned by a Confederate sympathizer, who apparently had fled Warrensburg during the war. By the spring of 1866, the absentee owner was back in Warrensburg petitioning the court for the return of his property. When she returned to Warrensburg in the fall of 1866, following a summer hiatus, Briggs reported that the rebel owners had reclaimed both the house and the ground that the McNeil School had occupied.¹⁹ At the time the claim against the school was first filed, local authorities had assured Briggs that the school would be moved to a permanent location as soon as a suitable place could be found.²⁰ After Warrensburg officials failed to make good on their promise, Smith and Briggs launched a campaign to build a new black school in the town. On June 1, 1867, the American Missionary Society purchased Lot 14 in Rentch's Addition in Warrensburg for the sum of \$100.23. According to Briggs, "with the blacks' assistance alone [she and Smith] succeeded in getting a new lot cost[ing] \$100.00 and a new larger house more than half completed."²¹ Notwithstanding this remarkable fundraising effort in Warrensburg's black community, the available monies proved insufficient to complete the school. When Briggs left Missouri in 1867 for the last time, the new building remained unfinished. Briggs briefly taught at the Lincoln Institute in Jefferson City before returning to her home in the East. Despite the difficulties she had experienced in Missouri, Briggs maintained an interest in black education and continued to offer her services to both the AMA and the Freedmen's Bureau.²²

Not long after Briggs's departure, the Freedmen's Bureau stepped forward with an offer to furnish the \$800 needed to finish the structure. Grateful for the assistance, the school's sponsors decided to call it Howard School, in honor of General Oliver Otis Howard, Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau. The one-room frame building, which measured 32'x24' and cost \$1,001.90 to build, was ready for occupancy in August 1867. The Freedmen's Bureau retained title to the building.²³ When the Howard School opened its doors, M. Henry Smith, recently named by the Warrensburg School Board to take charge of the city's black schools, served as the principal and teacher at the school. The Howard School was the newly established Warrensburg School District's first school building—no thanks to its efforts. The Reese School intended for white students was not occupied until later that same year. That structure, which cost \$13,000, was

15 C.A.R. Briggs to Samuel Hunt, January 29, 1866, AMA Archives.

16 C.A.R. Briggs to Samuel Hunt, July 2, 1866, AMA Archives, and *The History of Johnson County, Missouri* (Kansas City, Mo.: Kansas City Historical Company, 1881), 433-34.

17 S. K. Hall, to Samuel Hunt, November 10, 1865, and C.A.R. Briggs to Samuel Hunt, July 2, 1866, AMA Archives.

18 Joe M. Richardson, "Freedmen's Schools," in David C. Roller and Robert W. Twyman, *The Encyclopedia of Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 490-91; and Gary R. Kremer, *James Milton Turner and the Promise of America* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1991), 25-26.

19 C.A.R. Briggs to M.E. Strieby, August 15, 1867, AMA Archives.

20 C.A.R. Briggs to Samuel Hunt, April 31, 1866, AMA Archives.

21 C.A.R. Briggs to M.E. Strieby, August 15, 1867, AMA Archives.

22 C.A.R. Briggs to M.E. Strieby, August 15, 1867, AMA Archives.

23 *Warrensburg Standard*, May 3, July 26 and August 2, 1867.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 11

Howard School
Johnson County, Missouri

located at the northwest corner of Market and Warren streets.²⁴ In announcing the completion of the Howard School, the editor of the *Warrensburg Standard* wryly observed “it is a burning shame that our \$13,000 school house should hang fire so long, and that the first school house *ever completed in this town*, should be accomplished through the energy and zeal of the colored people and their friends.”²⁵

From the time of its construction in 1867, the original Howard School building was too small for the task of educating Warrensburg’s African American youth. School Board minutes dated April 2, 1867, when plans for the new school were still under consideration, show that M. Henry Smith had reported an average daily attendance of forty-five black students. By November of 1869, that number had climbed to seventy-five. On September 6, 1873, the school board authorized the payment of \$10 per month to rent space for colored classrooms in the basement and first floor of a house known as the Snoddy building. Two years later the board rented the Old Masonic Hall (probably Johnson County Lodge No. 85) on Main Street as a site for Grade 2 of the black school. An 1881 history of Johnson County noted that the lower level of that structure, which was built in 1845 and was still standing then, had prior to the creation of the Warrensburg School District been used as a classroom during the week and for religious services on Sundays. Grade 1 continued to meet at the Howard School. Temporary classroom space was also leased for a time in an old Baptist Church located on the southwest corner of Main and West Market Streets.²⁶ In other parts of Johnson County, there were also black schools. The author of the 1881 history reported that, “ten [colored] schools are kept open on an average of seven months in the year.”²⁷

Smith resigned his post at the Howard School in 1871 to become the first President of the Lincoln Institute in Jefferson City. Missouri’s first African American institution of higher learning had been founded at the urging of black Missourians who served in the Sixty-second United States Colored Infantry. Black soldiers from various units raised funds to launch the new school, which was established in Jefferson City in 1866, with Richard B. Foster serving as the school’s principal. In 1870, the Missouri General Assembly agreed to provide state support for the fledgling institution, and shortly thereafter Smith was named to the newly created post of president.²⁸

Following Smith’s departure from Warrensburg, his wife Sophia, with the continuing support of the AMA, took over as the teacher at the Howard School. Her letters to the AMA indicate that classes for black students were being taught in both the Howard School and the Snoddy building.²⁹ Preparatory to its dissolution, the Freedman’s Bureau transferred ownership of the Howard School building to the American Missionary Association in 1869, with the stipulation that the building or any subsequent proceeds from its rent or sale should perpetually be devoted to educational purposes and the added proviso that pupils should never be excluded on account of race or previous condition of servitude. Eventually the AMA withdrew its financial support for black education in Warrensburg, and in 1879, the philanthropic association conveyed ownership of the Howard School property to the Warrensburg School District for the sum of \$150.³⁰ Following that transfer, the Warrensburg School Board assumed sole responsibility for the school’s operation, but not surprisingly the Board lagged in its support for black education.

A few vocal citizens challenged the board to address the educational needs of Warrensburg’s African American students. In a letter published in the March 11, 1886 issue of the *Standard Herald*, C. H. Stewart observed that:

The Howard School of this city, as it stands today, is too small to accommodate the great number of children that live in this district. We need four teachers here to do justice to the colored youths in this community. We need higher branches than we are carrying. We need a school so graded that the scholars that are competent may take up high studies that will elevate their minds, something that will create and at the same time stimulate an appetite for study. That will make them factors indeed in the great reforms that the American people are looking forward to accomplish.

24 *History of Johnson County, Missouri* (1881), 432-33.

25 *Warrensburg Standard*, July 26, 1867.

26 Minutes of the Warrensburg Board of Education, April 2, 1867, November 29, 1869, and September 6, 1873, Warrensburg R-6 School District Central Office, Warrensburg, Missouri, and *History of Johnson County, Missouri* (1881), 432.

27 *History of Johnson County, Missouri* (1881), 283.

28 Lorenzo J. Greene, Gary R. Kremer, and Antonio F. Holland, *Missouri’s Black Heritage*. Revised edition. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993), 98-101.

29 Sophia L. Smith to Otis O. Howard, November 12, 1873, AMA Archives.

30 William E. Crissey, *Warrensburg, MO: A History With Folk Lore* (Warrensburg, Mo: Star-Journal Publishing Company, 1924), np.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 11

Howard School
Johnson County, Missouri

The care that is exercised in the interest of the white pupils by the board of directors in preparing them school room is retired to the backgrounds, when the subject of the colored man is brought forward.³¹

Stewart went on to lament that without such additional instruction, Warrensburg's black students could not be adequately prepared to attend the Lincoln Institute. Stewart then invited all black taxpayers to attend a meeting on March 16 at the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church for the purpose of advancing the educational interests of their children.³²

Such efforts yielded results when those in attendance at the April 3, 1888 annual school meeting voted to authorize the issuance of bonds in the amount of \$4000 for the purpose of "erecting a new building for the colored schools" and for the addition of two new rooms to the Reese building, a school for white children. On May 21, 1888 the Board of Education approved plans for the construction of a black school building consisting of three rooms 24'x32' with two halls. Each of the Howard School's three new rooms was equal in size to the entire original building. The board contracted with John Newcomer of Kansas City to provide the necessary plans and specifications. The board approved the plans submitted by Newcomer after making some unspecified alterations, additions, and modifications. Newcomer, identified as an architect in the board's minutes, received a fee of \$45.50 for his services. Once the final plans had been approved, the board invited local builders to submit bids for the new school's construction. The board awarded a contract to the low bidder, William Lowe. His successful bid of \$1605 included \$1570 for the building and \$35 for grading. The agreement also stipulated that he could have the old building, which was to be torn down to make way for the new school. The board further directed that the Howard School lot should be surveyed and the corners established and marked before the new building was laid off. They ordered "Star school desks No. 2, with ink wells etc. all complete ready to put down," from Haynes, Spencer, & Co. of Richmond, Indiana, at a cost of \$2.95 each. The board also sought advice concerning the construction of a coalhouse and two privies and for laying out walks at Howard School. Following its completion in 1888, the new Howard School became the sole educational facility for African Americans in Warrensburg. The year that the new school opened, the board employed Miss E. Molten, Frank Davis, and Professor W. B. Highgate to teach at the Howard School. Molten and Davis were each paid \$35 per month. Highgate received an additional \$10 per month for serving as the school's janitor.³³

As more students successfully completed instruction in lower grades, demands for more advanced coursework increased. Two years of high school courses were added initially. In 1929 the eleventh grade was added, and still later, the twelfth grade. With this final step, the Howard School program met the state's four-year standard for high school programs. In May 1932, Lillian Inez Visor became the first student to receive a diploma for the four-year high school program. Although the four-year high school curriculum satisfied the minimum state standards, the board continued to employ only three teachers for the Howard School. They were expected to provide instruction for all twelve grades. When the State Department of Education adopted new requirements for the accreditation and classification of schools in 1948, the school could not meet the higher new standards. After twice failing to secure approval for a bond issue, that included the additional funds that would have been required to upgrade the Howard School, the Warrensburg School Board voted to discontinue the Howard School's high school program. They agreed to transport any qualified African American high school students to the C. C. Hubbard High School (NR 7/03/97) located thirty miles to the east in Sedalia.³⁴

Following the closing of the high school program, the school board authorized improvements designed to modernize the Howard School facility, which was then used solely as a grade school. Those improvements included the addition of two indoor toilet rooms, an enlargement of the south classroom, and the installation of a heating plant. The south room was designated to serve as an assembly room or an auxiliary classroom. The Howard School offered classes for African American students until the integration of Warrensburg's schools led to its closing in 1955. Closure of the Howard School was, perhaps, a mark of its success, rather than failure. Over time

³¹ *Warrensburg Standard*, March 11, 1886.

³² *Warrensburg Standard*, March 11, 1886.

³³ Minutes of the Warrensburg Board of Education, February 24, March 7, May 21, June 11, June 18, July 3, July 13, and August 28, 1888.

³⁴ Lucille Gress, "The Howard School: A Warrensburg Landmark," typescript, np, copy on file at the Heritage Library, Johnson County Historical Society, Warrensburg, Missouri.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 11

Howard School
Johnson County, Missouri

Warrensburg residents came to the realization that the educational needs of black children were not being adequately met in the segregated school. Growing numbers understood that all children deserved the right to be educated in settings free of any color bias against the learner. Howard School played a role in developing these attitudinal changes, which eventually led to demands for the integration of Warrensburg's schools. Many former students still vividly remember their childhood experiences at Howard School. Frances Morgan Harden, who entered the eighth grade at Howard School, when her parents moved to Warrensburg in 1939 spoke eloquently about her memories of the Howard School:

Felice Gaines was one of my teachers, and the Greers, Fred and Olive. Felice was very exacting. She taught sewing and candy making. She had two sewing machines for two to fourteen girls. The manual training classes were on one side: it was noisy and dusty there. We'd have sawdust in the room, when Mrs. Greer was teaching us to cook. I was quite happy about the integration of schools because we had to use outdated books from other schools. I think the teachers did the best they could, they just didn't have much to work with. We moved into the change process of desegregation without any fighting. It went smoothly.³⁵

After completing her studies, Harden became the first Warrensburg's first African American practical nurse in the employ of a local physician. Leona Gray Williams Mackey, who began her studies at Howard School in 1920, recalled walking the 4½ miles from her home south of Warrensburg to the school because as she said, "We didn't know anything about busses in those days." Mackey completed two grades during her first year at Howard and advanced to through the tenth grade in 1929. At that time, Howard only offered instruction for grades one to ten. She subsequently moved to Coffeyville, Kansas, where she lived with an uncle in order to complete her high school education. She later attended the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and Lincoln University in Jefferson City. Mackey taught school in several Missouri school districts. The annals of Howard School are replete with similar stories of students who benefited from their days there.³⁶

Following Howard School's closing the old building continued to serve the Warrensburg community in various ways. When a fire destroyed the Warrensburg Armory Building in 1955, the Johnson County Library, which had been housed there, temporarily occupied quarters in the Howard School building. In the late 1950s, the Howard School was again pressed into service as the meeting place for Warrensburg's kindergarten classes. In 1968 the Warrensburg School District sold the building to the Jesus Saves Pentecostal Church of Warrensburg, which used the building for its religious services until it constructed a new church building behind the Howard School in 1987.³⁷ With the completion of the new building, the congregation vacated the Howard School building, which now stands empty. Today the Howard School is one of the oldest remaining African American School buildings in Missouri. The only known earlier such structure is the Benjamin Banneker School in Parkville, Missouri (NR 9/22/95), which predates the Howard School by three years. The Howard School's continuing presence in Warrensburg symbolizes the African American struggle to obtain educational parity in Missouri. Its well-documented history is, in large measure, a microcosm of the educational experiences of black Missourians from the time of emancipation to integration. For these reasons it qualifies for listing at a level of state significance.³⁸

35 Quoted in Gress, "The Howard School: A Warrensburg Landmark."

36 Gress, "The Howard School: A Warrensburg Landmark." Also see, Lucille D. Gress, *An Informal History of Black People of the Warrensburg Area* (Warrensburg, Mo: The Mid-America Press, 1933).

37 Gress, "The Howard School: A Warrensburg Landmark."

38 The preparers of this nomination gratefully acknowledge the valuable research assistance of Lucille Gress and Denise Miller.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 11

Howard School
Johnson County, Missouri

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**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 11

**Howard School
Johnson County, Missouri**

10. Verbal Boundary Description & Boundary Justification

The school property sits on lots 13 and 14 of Rentch's Addition